

Remarks

In response to the non-final Office Action mailed March 3, 2005, the Applicants respectfully requests reconsideration of the rejections and that the case pass to issue in light of the amendments above and the remarks below.

Rejection of Claims 1, 3-9 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1 and 3-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over USPN 4,211,976 to Inoue (the Inoue patent) in view of USPN 6,550,835 to Davis (the Davis patent). The Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 1 and dependent claims 3-9, which depend therefrom and include all the limitations thereof, are patentable and nonobvious over the cited references.

Independent claim 1 include limitations generally directed to a secondary panel forming an intermediate surface visible to the occupant between the instrument panel and at least a portion of a device. The Inoue patent fails to disclose such a limitation.

The Inoue patent discloses a panel (22) configured to fit around a device (8-11). The panel (22) overlays a portion of an opening (2) in an instrument panel (1) used to receive the device (8-11). Because the panel overlaps the opening and the instrument panel, it cannot form an intermediate surface between the device and the instrument panel - it's a covering surface, not an intermediate surface.

As such, the Inoue patent fails to disclose forming an intermediate surface between the opening and the instrument panel as required by independent claim 1. Accordingly, the Inoue patent fails to teach each limitation recited in independent claim 1. The Davis patent fails to make up for this deficiency. Consequently, independent claim 1 and

dependent claims 3-9, which depend therefrom and include all the limitations thereof, are patentable and nonobvious over the cited references.

Because the Applicants believe claim 1 to be patentable over the cited references, the Applicants have elected not to individually address the rejections to dependent claims 3-9. However, the Applicants would like to point out that the Inoue patent fails to teach the limitations of dependent claims 6 and 7, in particular. The Examiner is respectfully requested to support the rejection of the claims in his next response. The Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to point out where the Inoue patent discloses that the secondary panel "matches" (claim 6) a surface of the instrument panel and that the secondary panel "meets" (claim 7) the instrument panel so as to appear substantially integral to an occupant.

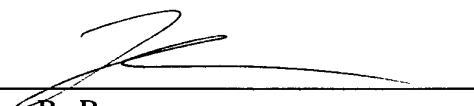
New Claims 22-34

The Applicants respectfully request adding new claims 22-34 to cover other patentable subject matter supported by the application as originally filed. Independent claim 22 generally relates to assembling an instrument panel and selecting secondary panels to cover gaps therein as function of the devices producing the gaps. Independent claim 24 generally relates to the use of a one-way light transmissible material to cover portions of an opening within an instrument panel.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, the Applicants respectfully submit that each rejection has been fully replied to and traversed and that the case is in condition to pass to issue. The Applicants respectfully submit no fees are due in connection with adding the new claims as the fees associated therewith were submitted in previous responses. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this case to issue. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned if it would further prosecution of this case to issue.

Respectfully submitted,
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